



INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS®

HAROLD A. SCHAITBERGER
General President

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General Secretary-Treasurer

November 19, 2003

The Honorable Chris Cox, Chairman
The Honorable Jim Turner, Ranking Member
Select Committee on Homeland Security
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Cox and Ranking Member Turner:


On behalf of the nation's more than 260,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, I wish to commend you on the bi-partisan proposal to provide desperately needed assistance to America's first responders. Your legislation will go a long way toward assuring that our nation's domestic defenders will get the training, equipment and support they need to protect America in the event of a terrorist attack.

As you are aware, the current structure of first responder grants has proven ineffective in providing resources to front line first responders. Quite simply, not enough money is reaching those most in need. Your proposal, which combines the best elements of the "PREPARE Act" and the "Faster and Smarter Funding for First Responders Act," will address many of these problems by assuring that funding is spent based on rational assessments, rather than arbitrary decisions made in state capitals around the nation.

We are also pleased that your proposal seeks to protect those first responder programs that are not terrorism-specific. The FIRE Act and the newly created SAFER Act serve critically important public safety missions, and should not be incorporated into other homeland security initiatives.

While much more work needs to be done in this area to strengthen the federal commitment to first responders, we believe your consensus legislation is a significant stride forward. We strongly urge all Members of the Select Committee on Homeland Security to support this vital public safety measure.

Sincerely,


Barry Kasnitz
Director of Governmental Affairs